



# JÓZEF PIŁSUDSKI

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TADEUSZ KASPRZYCKI

# JÓZEF PIŁSUDSKI AND HIS IDEAS ON INTERNATIONAL PEACE



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## Foundations of the Thought and Deeds of Józef Piłsudski

The years of the First World War were a historical turning point which placed our generation on the threshold of a new epoch.

For the Polish nation this historical upheaval constituted a change from more than a hundred years of captivity to the re-birth of the state, to liberty.

Poland was faced with extremely difficult national and social problems, which were beyond the strength of spirit and intellect of ordinary leaders.

To achieve this end, to lead the reborn country out of chaos and danger, Providence granted Poland a man far above average. This was Józef Piłsudski.

He was born shortly after the collapse of the 1863 Uprising. A son of the Vilno land, which had a great Polish majority, and at the same time was the central part of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, he grew up in an atmosphere thoroughly permeated with age-old association with Poland.

The people of the Grand Duchy — Lithuanians, Poles, Byelorussians, Tartars and others — gradually voluntarily adopted, from the time of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century, Polish liberal ideas, laws, culture, tolerance and, to a great extent, the Roman-Catholic faith. This great historical process moved far to the East the frontier between two worlds with cultures diametrically opposed in spirit: the East, world of autocracy and slavery, in the form of Moscow and further Asiatic countries — and the West, world of freedom and tolerance, in the form of the Republic of Poland.

The territory of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, joined together voluntarily by a union of state became the historical workshop for the tremendous changes taking place in culture and form of government.

This union, lasting for nearly five centuries, constantly developing and gaining in strength in its laws and form of government, was an unusual phenomenon in history.

During its peak period of achievement, it was destroyed by the assault of hostile neighbors. But for long years after the partitions of the Eighteenth Century, it continued to live in the hearts and minds of the nations of this Polish Commonwealth. An eloquent example of this was the generous and self-sacrificing participation in the battles of the 1863 Uprising of the people of Samogitia, a land predominately inhabited by Lithuanians.

It must be added that the laws and customs of the Republic



of Poland drew to it the enslaved and sorely oppressed people of the neighbouring Tsarist Russia. Thousands upon thousands of peasants escaped from the yoke of serfdom and religious persecutions to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, where these refugees and their descendants in the Eighteenth Century already constituted about eight percent of the population.

Freedom, tolerance, laws and customs formed a cultural symbionism and feelings of patriotism toward the common fatherland — were among the reasons, but not the only one — for the overwhelming preference for union with Poland, for union with the Commonwealth and its other neighbours of the Central-Eastern European region (Livonia, East Prussia, Moldavia) and even inclinations in certain Moscow circles.

The long centuries of living together in such an attractive atmosphere, in spite of occasional serious differences, and even tragic upheavals, did not weaken the evolution leading to a powerful common state and the conviction of the appropriateness of a union, and also an attachment to the Commonwealth and a peculiar pride in being part of it.

In this political and ideological climate, generation after generation grew up, taking part in the development of the common state, in defending it during the pre-partition wars, in battles of the Napoleonic epoch, in the uprising of the 1830 and 1863.

The generation of Józef Piłsudski grew up in these great traditions and ideals, but was born in captivity, and deeply felt the tragedy of the fatherland; ready to fight for its liberation, it was a generation of rebellion against Tsarist Russia.

Besides the influences flowing from history, other factors also shaped the spiritual and ideological character of Józef Piłsudski.

Among them was his childhood in a family plunged into an atmosphere of mourning and pain as a result of the failure of the uprising, deeply troubled by the barbaric repressions of the Tsarist government.

In this family, the main educational role was played by the mother, Maria nee Billewicz, an undaunted patriot. She reared Józef Piłsudski and his brothers and sisters in an atmosphere of Polish patriotism, attachment to the great traditions, of national pride and dignity.

In Poland, in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, as everywhere where Poles lived, the feeling of national grievance, the cult of freedom and aspiration to regain independence, and willingness to fight for it often resulted from the unusual role filled by the Polish woman.

There is probably no other country where, during years of national disaster or personal failures resulting from it, the woman would play such an important role as the Polish woman.

Most often the mother. At those times she acted through the strength of her spirit, her undaunted desire to defend ideals, unparalleled personal sacrifice and complete devotion to the national interest.

In times of danger, patriotic resistance was often based on her who, by the strength of the will, inspired those around her to hold out, to keep the faith, native culture, language and customs.

We see this abroad, in American countries, for instance. Descendants of Polish emigrants, from the peasant class especially, remained Polish. They did not abandon their vanquished Poland. This was mainly the accomplishment of the Polish Mother.

And so it was in the family of Józef Piłsudski. The mother's influence on her son was unusually strong. Her educational efforts ingrained in him a cult for Polish culture, acquainted him with the history of his country, with the works of the Polish patriotic poets, cultivated the wish to fight for the freedom of Poland, and awakened in him the pride and dignity of a Pole, as well as faith in the future of Poland. "There will be a Poland in the name of the Lord" was the way that mother usually ended communal prayers.

The son retained throughout his life an attachment and love for his mother and belief in the validity of her ideas.

"My Mother brought me up for the role that befell me", he said. The son was to retain a deep emotional tie to the ideas of his mother through years when she was no longer alive. "When I am in distress", he revealed, "uncertain, when everyone is against me, when I am surrounded by a torrent of indignation and accusations, when even the circumstances appear to conspire against my plans — then I ask myself how my mother would order me to act in this case, and I do what I consider would be her probable opinion, her wish, without looking back".

The period of his youth and schooling reinforced in Józef Piłsudski the feeling of national grievance and the necessity to fight for Poland.

These were years of brutal Russian repressions which, after the crushing of the uprising, were designed to emaciate the Polish element in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and also to wreak vengeance on classes of society suspected of favoring the insurgents. This extermination action was led by the Tsarist governor, Muraviev, nicknamed "wieszatiel" (the hangman).

There were not only bloody showdowns with the suspects, executions, prisons, but also mass repressions, such as seizure of property, land, deportations to Siberia, expulsions of families and settlements. Some of them were destroyed by fire, and even plowed over, so that there would remain no trace of the Polish community.



These boyhood experiences of Józef Piłsudski left a deep impression on the soul of the child and young man, and strengthened his will to fight, leading to his first patriotic efforts.

The short period of the time he spent after his secondary education at the faculty of medicine in Kharkov broadened the horizons of Józef Piłsudski. There he lived in an academic environment, caught up in the revolutionary spirit, rebellion against the authority of the despot and oppression of the masses. He was also subject to liberation ideas prevalent among the numerous Poles in the Ukraine.

The revolutionary activities of the student circles resulted in the shutdown of the university and in repressions. Piłsudski returned to Vilno. Soon, after being accused falsely of having participated in an attempt on the life of Tsar Aleksander III, he was arrested and deported to Siberia, as an individual dangerous for the Tsarist government.

Under extremely difficult climatic and material conditions, Piłsudski spent five years in eastern Siberia.

This long and hard period in exile as a twenty-year-old boy did not weaken his character. But it did give him a great deal of experience. He became familiar with the methods of the Russian government, the characteristics of its administration, the oppression against the convicts, the character of the Russian people, of the police and army. He also established contact with the deportees, patriots sentenced after the uprising.

The period of deportation shaped his world outlook, bolstered his will to undertake the struggle to which he was to devote his life in the name of the liberation of Poland and the good of its people.

This good could be achieved only in their own independent state. Through the participation of the wide masses of the Polish people, the liberation of the country could be achieved and consolidated — this was the unshakeable belief of the young deportee in Siberia.

This view was to become the starting point and the moving force of his long, unselfish struggle with the Tsardom for Poland, often conducted at the risk of his life.

I would like to pause briefly to discuss certain traits of Józef Piłsudski's character and mentality.

First of all, there was his unusual gift for foreseeing great events which the future was likely to bring. This was not any supernatural manifestation of visionary powers. These anticipations were completely based on fact. They were the result of penetrating thought, drawn out, often racking to the soul and nerves.

It was an analysis from all aspects of the elements of the given problem, covering the spiritual and moral characteristics of the social or national group, the psychological traits of peo-

ple influencing the course of events, material circumstances, obstacles, hypotheses of the development of the matter, etc. Therefore, Piłsudski's suppositions were the result of a keen analysis of reality. Naturally, the course of events could be influenced by unexpected side issues which could not be anticipated by the analysis described above. Therefore, the person called to achieve his goals had to overcome these obstacles, and that is where his character came through.

Józef Piłsudski carried out decisions to act, often made on the basis of such an appraisal of the situation and the resulting anticipation of its course, with unbending determination, in spite of often formidable obstacles.

In his life, filled with struggles for Poland, there were often acts flowing from the impulse of the heart, and the love and cult for his mother which remained strong through the years. He was sensitive to nature and its beauty, to children.

From his heart flowed deep feeling for the soldier whom he led, for the Polish army which, in his belief, in a period so difficult in Polish history, was the basis for the existence of Poland.

A full picture of the character of Józef Piłsudski is not the purpose of this work. It is chiefly to show that his role in our epoch was to be champion of peace, since this was the way to the liberation and preservation of a free Polish Commonwealth.

Let us indicate here at the end a trait flowing from his personal charm, his ability to influence peoples, especially useful in negotiations with foreign representatives, when it was necessary to convince them of the validity of his outlook or idea, and often to gain their friendship so vital for the Polish cause.

There were many such examples — Nuncio Ratti, the future pope, delegates of France and others, and even representatives of the hostile prime minister of Great Britain, Lloyd George, who, in spite of their prime minister's recommendations, succumbed to the reasoning of the Polish Chief of State.

## **II. Struggle Against the Yoke of Tsardom**

After his return from exile in 1892, Józef Piłsudski took up political-social activity without delay. This was a new stage in the development of Polish ideas on the road to progress.

Enlightened minds of pre-partition Poland showed the way for indispensable reforms in the field of social relations. At that time the problem of the rural population came to the forefront.

Kościuszko was convinced that the widespread participation of Polish masses would most surely contribute to victory over the invader. He gave expression to this feeling in his Manife-



sto of Połaniec, in which he promised the liberation of the peasants and, for those who take part in the struggle for Poland, immediate release from sojage.

The insurgent authorities of the Nineteenth Century also proclaimed freedom and rights for the Polish common people.

The ideas of Piłsudski were a further step on this road, harmonized with the social development of modern times. Their goal was to remove the injustices suffered by the working people, their full emancipation, both material and cultural. As was said above, the leading thought was that the achievement of this goal could only be reached fully in a completely independent country.

In Poland this led to the achievement of this independence, first of all, through a struggle with Tsarist Russia.

In an atmosphere of despondency after the failure of the uprising, the deepening resignation of the people, there was no political group in the country which could take up the watchword for freedom among the masses. Only the Polish revolutionary movement, based on socialist ideas, which was emerging among difficulties, opened real if distant perspectives in this direction.

This led Piłsudski in 1892 to participate in the work of the Polish Socialist Party. Undoubtedly, the thought and analysis of the situation of Poland and its people during his long years of exile in Siberia influenced his decision on the basis of the struggle to come.

Józef Piłsudski devoted all his energy to revolutionary work. Personal matters, creature comforts were removed from his life at that time.

His extremely dangerous activity was designed to awaken the working masses, attempt to get better living and working conditions for them, and also to indicate the role and duties of the people on the territory of the subjugated Commonwealth. Piłsudski undertook far-flung organizational, propaganda and publishing action, which he carried on in the harsh conditions of conspiracy, mercilessly tracked by the elaborate apparatus of the Tsarist police. He was its chief creator. He published secretly, in the Russian partition sector, the organ of the Polish Socialist Party, "Robotnik".

He was a leader whose thought delved to the bottom of ideological foundations and the program of the budding revolutionary movement, to which he indicated ways toward liberation of the fatherland and social justice.

Arrested in 1900, he was imprisoned in the famous tenth pavillion of the Warsaw citadel, the place of suffering and torment for numerous Polish fighters and patriots. A group of his collaborators successfully carried out the risky rescue of their leader, who was diligently guarded by the enemy.

His hard work, unshrinking before danger, evoked deep respect, even among his opponents. Roman Dmowski, leader of the National Party, stressed that in spite of his long years of exile in Siberia, lengthy stay in prison, the difficult life in conspiracy with constant tension of the spirit, relentlessly pursued by the enemy — Piłsudski lived to serve his ideals. Roman Dmowski said that as far as his moral strength was concerned, he was an extraordinary man.\*)

Among Piłsudski's activities, fighting against Tsarist Russia — the source of Poland's bondage and that of other nations — remained in the forefront.

During the unfortunate Russo-Japanese war, he tried to persuade the Japanese to back the Polish liberation movement. When, as a result of Russia's military defeat, the revolutionary movement gained momentum in the empire and on the territory of Poland, Piłsudski created the "Fighting Organization of the Polish Socialist Party". As the armed branch of the revolution, it was to constantly harass the occupant's apparatus by means of a kind of guerilla warfare, attacking the police, the protective army units, etc. It was to be the directing cadre for mass actions. Its mission was to convince the population that Russian strength was not insurmountable. It was to counter with violence the violence of the enemy.

The socialism of P.P.S. (Polish Socialist Party) which Piłsudski led was conditioned upon the situation of Poland. It could not develop normally as in free nations. Piłsudski took this fully into consideration in his tactics. Under his leadership, the socialist ideology was based on the humanitarian climate, and not on foundations frozen one-sidedly. The doctrine of class struggle, class hatred, did not come to the forefront of the action. The fight for independence could not be the achievement of one social class. The effort of the whole nation was needed. Piłsudski's thought veered in the direction of compromise between the goal of regaining the freedom of the Commonwealth, and aspirations for social justice.

After 1905, the revolutionary movement weakened, and was finally broken by reaction. There came an end to the activities of the "Fighting Organization", severely dissipated by repressions. Its great achievement was the training of a great number of fighters hardened by battles, whose participation in the next phase of the independence movement was extremely valuable for Piłsudski.

An epilogue to the history of the Fighting Organization was the victorious battle near Bezdany in the Vilno region: the wrecking of a strong military unit protecting a transport of government funds. Piłsudski took part in this battle personally.

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\*) "W ćwierćwiecze zgonu", S. Benedykt, p. 17.



Thus, he gave expression to his emotional tie to the fighters for a great cause who battled under his orders, sometimes at the cost of their lives. As often later on, the leader's gesture of the heart revealed his affectionate bond with the soldiers serving under him. In spite of the great risks, providence chose to spare the leader, in order to allow him to continue his war march toward Poland. He was to undertake it differently then.

Piłsudski devoted all his attention to the growing crisis in international relations in the years following the above-mentioned revolutionary ferment in Russia. His gift for foresight convinced him that the development of relations in Europe would lead to a war between the great powers, and that the occupying powers would fight among themselves as well. This would open positive perspectives for the rebirth of Poland.

However, the Poles could not be a submissive mass of soldiers, fighting on opposing sides in the name of foreign and inimical interests.

The problem of the Polish nation had to emerge against the background of the international situation; in the light of historical justice as a postulate of the freedom of Poland, and in the interest of real peace. Napoleon said once that Poland was the supporting pillar of the dome of peace in Europe.

Piłsudski was convinced that this could only happen through Poland's accent on arming, against the background of the approaching European conflict.

To his end a special effort had to be made in advance of the approaching war to prepare Polish participation in this conflict.

Piłsudski carried out a change in the methods of liberation work. This preparatory action had to be based on a wider scale than the earlier revolutionary action, and had to be founded on the participation of the nation, and not just the party.

Systematic work was undertaken, aimed at training military cadres to form the nucleus of Polish military strength to be used for war operations.

In 1908 the organizational beginning of this action became "Związek Walki Czynnej" (Union of Active Struggle), formed by K. Sosnkowski. Piłsudski took over leadership of "ZWC" as Commander-in-Chief, while his deputy was "citizen Józef" (K. Sosnkowski), who at the same time served as chief-of-staff of the organization.

Therefore, a few years before the First World War, there was organized action for independence in the form of Polish military work, in accordance with the wishes of the Commander-in-Chief. This action had the only possible basis in the Austrian Partition. Piłsudski undertook no political obligation with regard to the Austrians, but only accepted the technical assistance of their government which, in anticipation of war with Russia, backed the Polish aspirations, although rather half-heartedly.

"The Union of Active Struggle" became the basis for more extensive military action, which appeared in Galicia as Riflemen's Associations, were kept secret in the Russian Partition and in Russia, appeared in a more limited way in the Prussian Partition, and strongly in the numerous concentrations of Poles abroad. Similar movements developed in Riflemen's Associations and to a certain extent also in other organizations where the spirit of active patriotism began to stir.

The preparatory military action first of all covered the student youth, country and city working class youth and centers outside the country.

In this way a rather large officers' and concommisioned officers' cadre was trained. This made possible the formation of the first larger units of the Polish army, of legionnaire regiments and brigades.

Piłsudski's concern and difficult task was to protect this nucleus of Polish political gain against attempts of foreign interests to use it for their own ends.

In the period of history approaching then, Piłsudski felt that the army would play a nationally important role. Through its military efforts, it was to reawaken the traditions of the Polish soldier. For a long time these traditions had been wilting in the hearts of Poles, with great damage to the national spirit. The army was to reveal in the field of battle that the sacrifice of Polish blood was borne with a thought to the liberation of Poland, and that its only goals were not the interests of the partitioning powers. Piłsudski calculated that the restoration of a national army would make it easier to overcome the psychosis of subjugation, would restore the national dignity of the Poles, and in time would contribute to a more rapid union between the people and the state.

Piłsudski not only foresaw the war a few years before the event, but also its general course. We have proof that more than a year before 1914 he unquestionably revealed this confidentially in talks in 1913 with a Nationalist-Democratic activist, and at the beginning of 1914 with the chief of the Russian revolutionary socialists. His plan of action was connected with this: in the first phase, with the backing of Austria, against Tsarist Russia, which would be beaten, and in the final phase against the Germans, when the Central Powers, Germany and Austria, succumbed to the thrusts of the superior strength of the western powers.

In the first phase, the legionnaire soldier was to be the instrument of action. In many battles in the years 1914-1917, the Legion Brigades demonstrated their great virtues in combat and their soldierly morale. The beautiful traditions of the Polish army were admirably revived. Piłsudski's policies, based on this, contributed to a great extent to carrying the Polish problem out to the international arena.



The second instrument of action, the Polish Underground Military Organization, was prepared since the beginning of the war mainly for the second phase — the turn against Germany. In accordance with the decisions of Piłsudski, its Commander-in-Chief, it was to develop an extensive network of military schools and units which, after the collapse of the German might, were to take part, after the removal of the occupant, in the build-up of the second wave of Polish armed forces. About fifty thousand soldiers organized in the Polish Underground Military Organization (POW) took part effectively in the organization of the regenerated army. In this way was fulfilled the final task which Piłsudski had set for POW already after the first year of the war, when war operations had removed the Russians from the territory of Poland proper. Of course, POW could have become the center of struggle against the occupants if the latter had retreated amidst anarchy and violence. The emerging Polish nation was threatened with a grave danger. This was the possibility that the German army which had occupied parts of Russia — an army which was not broken by the enemy but was morally shaken — might march through Poland. The tasks of resisting the confusion would have fallen to POW. To a large extent, catastrophe was averted owing to the tactics of Piłsudski.

Piłsudski was anxious to maintain the strength of POW for the initial period of independence. In 1917, just before his arrest and deportation to a German fortress, he issued orders to his subordinate, the Head of POW, to move the headquarters of the organization from Warsaw to the Austrian occupation and take care that in the final phase of war operations the POW not be annihilated — he was counting on it.

### III. Geopolitical Picture of Central-Eastern Europe

After the First World War, the territory of Central-Eastern Europe was the region where Piłsudski conducted particularly lively diplomatic and military activity. It presented a picture of a complicated ethnic chessboard, with two dominant sources of aggressive imperialism — Germany and Russia.

Germany — the guiding thread of the history of this nation is the push to the east, "Drang nach Osten", lasting for more than a thousand years. This brought the slaughter of western Slavs between the Elbe and the Oder, and later aggressive attempts against Polish lands and expansion along the Baltic.

In spite of their defeat in the First World War, the Germans tried for gains in the east. By means of the units of General von der Goltz, supposedly independent of the Berlin government, they carried out operations in Lithuania and Latvia, supported by reactionary Russian elements.

During the German occupation, there was collaboration between certain Lithuanian elements and the Germans. After the German defeat in the war, pro-German influences continued to play a part in the political tactics of the Lithuanian government. This was the main reason that cooperation between Lithuania and Poland, so necessary for the preservation of the existence of the two countries, encountered such serious obstacles.

Through conquest, Russia amassed a huge colonial empire, in which about fifty percent of the population was formed by captive nations and tribes of East-Central Europe and northern Asia. Since they were hostile to the Russian use of force, they weakened the national strength of the Russian empire, which was also thoroughly undermined by social antagonisms, particularly in the agrarian field.

Therefore, this country was always permeated by an atmosphere of rebellion, expressed by struggles for freedom, usually bloodily crushed: the Polish wars and uprisings from Kościuszko to Piłsudski, struggles of the Caucasus under the legendary hero Shamil, lasting for tens of years, disturbances in the land of the Volga and among the peoples of Asia, as well as revolutionary impulses of the Russians themselves.

The course of history brought about a deep and strong penetration of the Polish element to the east. Along the future border of Riga, close to the line of the second partition, in the period of Piłsudski's activity there existed a thoroughly mixed belt nationally, strongly Polish, extending for a thousand kilometers from north to south, and about four hundred wide from west to east. These were territories of a kind of "common fatherland": Polish-Lithuanian, Polish-Byelorussian, Polish-Ukrainian, often in large and numerous regions with a majority of Poles, settled there for centuries.

The psychological character of the people inhabiting these territories, the Eastern Lands of the former Polish Commonwealth, was varied.

In the north, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Poles, Lithuanians, Byelorussians and others on the whole formed a group living in harmony in a climate of tolerance. Centuries of co-existence in a common state based on a free union, great joint historical acts, family ties — all contributed to this evolution. Its influence did not disappear in spite of the fact that progress emphasized the various ethnic differences and developed a consciousness of national differences. Enemy action, aimed at undermining the Polish influence, exploited these differences with increasing intensity.

In the south, the Ukrainian national character, full of dynamism and offensive impulses, created a climate of a completely other nature. National antagonisms in the period in question



became more clearly pronounced, especially since they were aggravated by the complicated agricultural problems.

The national awareness of the Ukrainians under the Austrian Partition was especially high in Eastern Galicia. Nevertheless, it was still a joint Polish and Ukrainian "fatherland" with decided Polish relative majority north of the Dniester, and a Ukrainian majority south of this river.

In the Russian Partition, in the Ukraine on the Dniepr, the degree of Ukrainian national awareness was more limited; it was rather a feeling of distinctness from the "Muscovite", and hostility toward him. The dominant factor here was the feeling of injustice based on land hunger. In this connection there often appeared hostility toward landowners, and landed estates were often in the hands of the "Polish gentry".

These were phenomena which greatly complicated cooperation in liberation action by the Polish and Ukrainian inhabitants of the Ukraine on the Dniepr. The social conditions and insufficient political experience of the masses of Ukrainian population, as also the anti-Polish tendencies of certain Galician Ukrainian politicians, made difficult the coordination of action against Russian oppression. But there were also politically mature trends well-disposed toward cooperation with Poland as, first of all, the Ataman Petlura movement.

This sketchy outline of ethnic and political conditions on the eastern lands of the pre-partition Polish Commonwealth indicates the serious difficulties faced by the action of Józef Piłsudski, toward which the circumstances of history led, opening far-reaching perspectives for the nations of Central-Eastern Europe.

Poland was an obstacle both for Germany and Russia to the realization of their intended aggressive plans. So then, the main goal of these imperialist states was not to allow Poland to form strong defensive ties with threatened nations capable of repelling aggression. This was the main source of the action of paralyzing the efforts of Piłsudski to base the peace of this part of Europe on lasting foundations.

From the south Poland had friendly neighbours, such as the Rumanians, Hungarians, Slovaks. With regard to the Czechs, by means of Piłsudski's letter (of December, 1918), to President Masaryk, Poland demonstrated its readiness for friendly cooperation with the Czechs, which was to be especially meaningful for the strategic security of the two nations.

#### IV. Political Tendencies of Piłsudski (after 1918)

Unusual historical circumstances emerged after the First World War. Piłsudski foresaw this. It had to be utilized to restore the independence of Poland, to bolster its national existence and to promote general peace.

What means appeared for the fulfillment of this goal? To throw off the yoke of bondage imposed for more than a century by the three partitioning powers — Russia, Germany and Austria, to gain the indispensable basis for free development.

The hostile attitude of the partitioning powers toward Poland, particularly of Russia and Germany, continued. Propaganda from these sources tried to undermine confidence in the emerging Polish nation. It indicated that Poland was characterized by aggressive imperialism, that it had designs on the land of its neighbours, although it had just regained its own independence.

The tendencies in Poland, led by the ideas of Piłsudski, were channeled in exactly the opposite direction. Not wars of conquest, but peaceful coexistence between the free nations of our region and their voluntary cooperation were Poland's goal. It was this that the existence of Poland and its neighbors had to be based on; this was the chief aim. This was to be the unwavering theme of our policy. Besides, it was to be based on a strong organization of peace and general security. Piłsudski's political ideas have to be understood in this way.

The years of 1919 and 1920 were filled with Poland's military effort, strongly coordinated with diplomatic efforts. The goal was not to impose Polish domination, nor to conquer foreign territory. In the spirit of Polish tradition, a sincere slogan was "for your liberty and ours". It was in complete harmony with the true interest of the Republic of Poland. In its history, imperialist wars of conquest never played any major role.

The wars which Poland was forced to conduct after 1918 were intended to save the reborn nation. These were mainly a strong defense of the nation against the aggression of Bolshevik Russia, as also against attempts against Polish territories, primarily by the Germans.

At certain times during the hostilities, Polish armies helped its neighbours to throw off the yoke of Russian bondage. The position of Poland regarding the strengthening of the freedom of its neighbours was clearly stated in the declarations of Józef Piłsudski when, as Commander-in-Chief, he undertook the necessary military operations.

After wresting Vilno away from Bolsheviks in April of 1919, this is what he said in a address to "The residents of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania: "For the past scores of years, your country has not known freedom, oppressed by the armed might of Russia, Germany, the Bolsheviks — oppression which, without asking the leave of the people, imposed alien modes of behavior on them, frustrating their will, and often ruining their lives.

This state of constant bondage, well known to me personally, as one who was born in this unhappy land, must be abolished once and for all, and once and for all on this God-



forsaken land there must be freedom and the unlimited right of expression concerning aspirations and needs. The Polish army which I have brought with me to throw out the rule of outrage and violence, to abolish the domination of the country in defiance of the will of the people — this army brings liberation and freedom to you all.

“I want to make it possible for you to solve your internal, national and religious problems in such a way as you yourselves will wish, without the slightest pressure from Poland”.

So then, it was with a promise of liberation and a better future that Józef Piłsudski addressed the Poles, Lithuanians, Byelorussians and all other inhabitants of the territory which, as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, for nearly five centuries had lived within the framework of the Commonwealth of Poland.

During the winter campaign of 1919-1920, the Polish army cooperated with Latvian army to free the territory of Dyneburg from the Bolsheviks and to secure the frontier of Latvia on the side of Russia. The goal, then, was assistance to a neighbour to retain its independence, which the Polish Commander-in-Chief clearly stated. Poland did not seek to occupy this Latvian territory, although it had been a part of the Commonwealth for a long time (Livonia).

Piłsudski's concept regarding the Ukraine was no different. The independence of that country was the chief element of the strategic security of Poland. The history of both countries indicated that danger could be expected from the side of Russian imperialism. According to Piłsudski's concept, a strong safeguard against this imperialism should be defensive cooperation between the two countries. To this end he undertook intensive action, both diplomatic and military. During the spring of 1920, the so-called “expedition to Kiev” was undertaken, as a result of the Polish-Ukrainian alliance agreement. This action was successfully carried out by Polish divisions, jointly with the Ukrainian divisions of Ataman Petlura. The goal, of course, was the liberation of the Ukraine from Russian domination, and not a Polish attempt to conquer Ukrainian territory.

Piłsudski, as the Polish Commander-in-Chief, said in an address to “All residents of the Ukraine”: “...when the national government of the Republic of the Ukraine puts into operation the national authorities and when armed masses of the Ukrainian people stand on its borders, ready to defend their country from invasion, and the free nation will be able to decide itself about its destiny — the Polish soldier will return to the borders of the Republic of Poland, having fulfilled his lofty task of liberating the people”.

For many centuries, until the partitions, the territory of the Ukraine belonged to the Polish Commonwealth. This Commonwealth — Poland, Lithuania, the Rus — despite difficult periods

in history, sometimes tragic occurrences, was on the way to increasing its cohesion. In the Seventeenth Century, the enlightened minds of Polish and Ukrainian statesmen realized the evolution of the Commonwealth from "two nations", the Polish-Lithuanian union, into a state composed of three nations having, equal rights. The agreement, sometimes referred to as a union, concluded in Hadziacz in 1658, established that "The Grand Duchy of Ruthenia (the Ukraine) would be the third member of the Commonwealth".

The armed intervention of Moscow and its aggressive policy impeded the realization of the act which was to make the Commonwealth so powerful that she and her neighbours would be protected from the disaster of Russian captivity.

In Piłsudski's concept, the indispensable element for effective defense of the region of Central-Eastern Europe against possible aggression was cooperation between a free Poland and a free Ukraine.

The above declarations clearly defined the tendencies of Piłsudski's policy regarding the nations of the region. Their freedom was a basic goal. Based on the proper organization of peace, it was the foundation of the strategic security of the territory of Central-Eastern Europe; also, it ensured the independence of Poland. Piłsudski's policy could not be based on Russia nor on Germany because of the aggressive imperialism of both of those countries.

These two sources of danger and possible aggression threatened not only Central-Eastern Europe, but Western Europe as well. Piłsudski's concept of the peace of Europe was, therefore, indivisible.

It was indispensable to put into operation methods guaranteeing repulsion of aggression, as well as to act in time to prevent it.

The geopolitical position of Poland was such that it was constantly threatened both from east and west.

It could be compared to a fortress besieged by much stronger enemies, and repeatedly undermined in order to bring about its downfall. The wide masses of the population failed to realize the gravity of their situation at the outset.

From the first day of independence, Marshal Piłsudski directed all his energy to draw together the threatened nation, to find ways to prevent the catastrophe, and to expand the armed forces in order to counteract the numerous aggressions against the fatherland.

In the Marshal's foreign policy, this was expressed in attempts to maintain cooperation between the nations morally responsible for keeping the peace, in aspirations to coordinate the means of stemming the growing aggression. Besides this, his



main task was to provide all the means possible for the armed forces used to fight defensive wars then in progress.

Piłsudski, as Commander-in-Chief and Chief of State, was faced with extremely difficult tasks. The material means for military needs were insufficient, the political situation complicated, a number of attempts had been made to undercut the resistance of the regenerated country, insufficiently consolidated in many ways.

Systematic German and Soviet action was intensively carried out in this sphere: propaganda, diversion and sabotage.

There were also internal sources of weakness. There were various reasons for this. The country-long captivity, three different directions of social and political development on occupied Polish territory resulted in a lack of maturity of the wide masses of the population. This was to be expressed in the damaging fact that the population, and even the party leadership, to a great extent failed to realize how very much the external situation of Poland was permanently exposed, and that it could soon become most dangerous.

For these reasons, as well as because of the specific national traits of the peoples and the complicated ethnic composition of the country, the start of the reborn Republic took place under unfortunate ideological, psychological and materiel conditions.

Therefore, from the day he returned from imprisonment in the German fortress, Piłsudski was faced with a number of extremely difficult problems which he had to solve in order to save Poland.

His political thought and national deeds were concentrated on all the goals and problems we have discussed. Piłsudski was a champion of peace, this was the way he saw, along with the build-up of the might and strength of the spirit of Poland, to a realistic consolidation of her freedom and existence.

This is the ideological basis for the "Epoch of Józef Piłsudski", which is still a guidepost to Poland's future.

## **V. Foundations of Peace, as Conceived by J. Piłsudski**

Previously there was a discussion of the tendencies which were the starting point of Piłsudski's activity after the end of the First World War.

He sought to realize the main elements of the structure of peace, on which strategic security and the development of Poland and other countries of the region should be based.

The Marshal's concept for peace concerned the eastern periphery of Poland as well as the western one.

In the east, his action was aimed at reorganizing Central-Eastern Europe on the basis of ensuring freedom of nations

subjugated by Russia. This was to lead to the liquidation of the "Russian prison of nations".

Of course, "blind hate" of the Tsars' empire was not the moving force of the action undertaken, as is sometimes insinuated by chronically inimical opinion or enemy propaganda.

Despite the grievous wrongs done Poland by Russia, despite the calamities and brutal repressions, the Marshal did not reject the possibility of finding a *modus vivendi* with the Russian nation. Naturally, this could only be on condition that the traditions of reactionary methods of ageold Russian imperialism be done away with. Piłsudski hoped that the new democratic Russian state would recognize the demands for freedom of the captive nations and their right to self-determination.

To this end, Piłsudski long maintained the necessary contacts. There is proof that the Russian democracy recognized such Polish principles as the position of the strongest faction of its socialism (S.R.) or the 1917 declaration of Prince Lwow, the democratic premier of the new Russia, recognizing not only the independence of Poland but generally its influence over the eastern regions.

It must be added that the Bolsheviks also took up the slogan of Polish independence (declaration of the Petrograd Soviet). This was insincere and deceitful, since it was aimed at absorbing Poland into the Soviet Union.

The new structure of the region of Central-Eastern Europe made it necessary to introduce forms of government especially suited to the geopolitical situation which developed.

The solution most suitable to the problems of the region was presented by Piłsudski's federal policy. The centuries-long experience of Poland before the partitions indicated the advantages enjoyed by nations participating in federal unions — voluntary unions with Poland.

The first step in this direction had to be repulsion of Soviet aggression, and the next — backing of the aspirations of Poland's neighbours to regain their independence. Then they could express themselves freely about living together with Poland.

After 1918 Marshal Piłsudski undertook especially animated diplomatic action directed toward federal policies. He first concentrated on the north-eastern region, the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and the Baltic countries.

This action, which could be most beneficial to the future of the nations involved, faced obstacles from various sources. Obviously, German, as well as Soviet policy, energetically opposed this action. They were helped by the fact that Piłsudski's intentions were misunderstood by the Western governments, and by the opposition of certain Polish political circles which did not wish to see the greatest advantages for Poland in the federal



concept, or perhaps rather were motivated by intemperate animosity toward the Marshal. Ignacy Paderewski, as premier of the government and the representative of Poland in the west, gave his full support to the federal policy.

Where federal solutions were too difficult during this period, it was necessary to conclude alliance agreements to oppose aggression, bolster security and carry out the necessary military tasks.

The military defeat of Russia and Germany, as well as the Soviet revolutionary upheaval created a real possibility to eliminate the threat of renewed aggressive attempts by Germany and Russia hanging over Europe, or at least to weaken them effectively.

The Versailles Treaty effected the complete disarmament of Germany, strictly observed, reinforced by provisions aimed at stemming the resurgence of aggression. The situation in Russia was different; although defeated, it retained its freedom of action, and could be dangerous.

What was the role of Poland to be, within the framework of the planned new structure of Central-Eastern Europe? In the concept of Piłsudski, it would have to be a stabilizing element of the new foundations for peace. Of course, its role would not be that of a gendarme of the new assembly of nations, but rather a center of law and culture in the spirit of the traditional ideas of the Polish Commonwealth, and also the keystone of a defense system for the preservation of the freedom of the region.

In accordance with this concept, the resurrected Poland should be a strong state territorially developed with a purpose, with reasonable frontiers in the west, and extended to the east in keeping with the great range over which the Polish element was settled there throughout many centuries.

Various actions in the Marshal's policy indicated that, regardless of the outcome of the federal policy, he was categorically fighting the attempts to cut Polish territory by, for instance, imposing a frontier on the River Bug. This position of Poland was understood by certain of its mighty neighbours. The above-mentioned declaration by the head of the democratic government of Russia, Prince Lwow, as well as recognition by the national Ukrainian government of the frontier in Volhynia and the Zbrucz — attest to the acknowledgement of Polish rights in the Eastern Region.

The policy which Poland had to conduct in these territories was directly opposed to the incorporating tendencies of Polish nationalist circles, at that time already completely out of touch with reality. According to the ideas of the Marshal, coexistence in ethnically mixed territories of Poland was to be based on mutual tolerance, the freedom of all nationalities to develop, respect for the law, but with absolute loyalty toward the State.

Unfortunately, this mosaic ethnic state of eastern Poland was

constantly exploited by German and Soviet diversive action in order to weaken Poland, under circumstances conducive to destroying the country.

This anti-Polish action was all the more dangerous since the Polish people were not aware of the gravity of the situation and did not take in their stride the unimportant ordinary clashes of political life or the every-day worries unavoidable in the situation the country was in at that time.

The Poles were capable of solidarity and patient work in times of danger or national disaster, rather than during periods of a relative, if superficial climate of peace. It was therefore a serious concern of Piłsudski's government to counteract both internal and external destructive tendencies, and to attempt to make the country and the people as resistant to them as possible.

A guarantee to the maintenance of the independence of the Republic of Poland was to develop a system of defensive agreements capable of removing the threat of aggression and strong enough to triumph over aggression.

According to the ideas of Piłsudski, the political alteration of Central-Eastern Europe was not enough; it was also absolutely necessary to include another basic element of stabilization ensuring peace on the continent, namely the participation of the democratic Western powers.

The first step was French participation and cooperation between Poland and France in peace and war. From the beginning the Marshal emphasized the importance of including Great Britain, as an element which would greatly strengthen the efficiency of the whole system. Polish action as a champion of peace, conducted in the name of the loftiest aims, binding the fate of Poland with that of Western and Eastern Europe, was not all that the Marshal did to create a strong foundation for the existence of the nation. *Si vis pacem para bellum* — to have peace, the Marshal thought that armed forces should play an important role; not only in the first phase, when pressure of aggressors against Poland would have to be crushed, but also in the following period, which be anticipated to be one of uncertain peace. Therefore, the following years of Piłsudski's efforts were concentrated on the basic problems of Poland's existence — salvation of the peace and expansion of defensive might.

## VI. Difficult Realization of Józef Piłsudski's Plan

From the time independence was regained, Józef Piłsudski's activity entered a new phase on the road to securing the existence of free Poland. This was a phase of problems extremely difficult to solve, a phase filled with unusually dramatic tensions.

For a time, Poland found itself at the edge of a precipice, when even its independence was threatened, while at different times



it attained hard-fought successes which gave it world renown and greatly increased its authority.

In the final years of the First World War, 1914-1918, Piłsudski, in accordance with a plan made much earlier, broke off relations with the governments of the Central Powers in order to regain his freedom of movement with a view to independence, and anticipated a showdown over the German and Austrian Partitions.

A painful break-up of the legions followed; then imprisonment in a German fortress of the Commander-in-Chief, Józef Piłsudski and his deputy K. Sosnkowski. However, the Polish Underground Military Organization (POW) continued to act clandestinely. After the return of the prisoners from the German fortress in November 1918, their work was based mainly on the POW.

The position of the reborn Poland was extremely precarious both internally and externally. Deprived of all resources, ruined by years of war operations on its territory and pillage by the occupants, she was also surrounded by the boundfires of revolutionary upheavals, such as Russia, Germany, and then Hungary. She was also threatened by the aggressive attempts of certain of her neighbours.

Only the unshaken perseverance of Piłsudski in the pursuit of his aim made it possible to lift the country out of chaos and to save it from anarchy.

His first efforts were designed to save Poland politically and to form a coalition government, but they yielded no results.

Piłsudski was deeply convinced that only a reasonable political compromise could lead to the goal. This was not understood in certain party circles, despite the fact that the grave situation of Poland clearly called for a compromise.

Piłsudski also attempted to control social disturbances caused by the difficult post-war situation of the population, especially since a new period of war sacrifices and renunciations was at hand.

The great authority of the leader of the fight for freedom was responsible for the fact that, without any political convulsions, the supreme authority in the state and the army was gathered in the hands of Piłsudski, who drew away from the role of dictator.

One of his first acts was the decision to call up the legislative parliament (Sejm). After general elections conducted in a thoroughly democratic way, this parliament met already in February 1919.

The promise of reforms and the intention to improve the defective agrarian structure contributed to immunizing the common people against tendencies of social upheavals penetrating from abroad.

To complete the picture of the continuing difficulties, let us add the obstacles provided by the unfavorable policies of Poland's

western allies. They did not want to understand the steps that Poland had to take to consolidate its existence and form the proper basis for the peace of Central-Eastern Europe.

Day by day, the problems of war operations mounted. It was important to gather in Poland the armed forces and Polish soldiers scattered all over the world. The members of the Polish Underground Military Organization and the Legionnaires immediately placed themselves at the disposal of Piłsudski. These were several tens of thousands of trained soldiers, some of them with war experience. Besides, in France there were the divisions commanded by General J. Haller, strong, well-equipped, composed of many Polish American volunteers anxious to fight for Poland. It took months to get the divisions to Poland, which was fighting off attacks on various fronts.

Volunteers battling in defense of the rights of the nation in Lvov, in Vilno, in the Silesian uprisings, the Poznań uprising and other border districts were most useful. Great numbers of Poles from the armies of the partitioning powers, in part concentrated in Polish formations in the East, such as that of Żeligowski and Czuma, gradually joined the national army hard at work in the struggle with the Soviet invaders. Unfortunately, the great corps gathered near Bobrujsk under General Dowbor-Muśnicki capitulated to the Germans, and with them the rich stores of this front of the Russian army, which would have been a valuable addition to the modest Polish supplies. The scattered soldiers of Dowbor joined the Polish Army, regrouping some of their formations.

The forming national army could draw only in part on this rich reservoir of soldiers. What made it difficult was the fact that the reservists had been exhausted by years of war, and the shortage of supplies. A very happy circumstance which must be mentioned is that there was a great deal of volunteer element in the forming army, which contributed to the unusually strong backbone that characterized the high quality of the Polish fighting man.

At very beginning the reborn country became involved in war operations in Galicia, in eastern Little Poland, with the Ukrainians. For a few months the fight went on in lands which had been the common Polish-Ukrainian fatherland for centuries. Intrigues by the Austrian government, about to disappear into nothing, did much to harm the future of the two nations. These struggles delayed and complicated cooperation between Poland and the whole of the Ukraine in the feat of throwing off the yoke of Russia and ensuring that it would not return.

Within a short time, there followed a Czech attack on Polish Cieszyn Silesia (Zaolzie). This attack was plotted by anti-Polish Czech circles although, on the initiative of Piłsudski, favored by the Czech president, Masaryk, the possibility of cooperation



between the two nations had begun to emerge. Intensive struggles also developed with the Germans, who resisted giving up Polish territories; these were mainly the three Silesian uprisings.

As early as February 1919, aggression of Soviet Russia against Poland had its start. The first clashes occurred in Volhynia. Gradually, they moved to the north as the German occupying armies retreated west.

The war was waged over a wide territory in eastern regions of the former Commonwealth of Poland. The scope of the theater of war and the negligible strength of the two opponents in the first months contributed to special operational conditions completely different from the methods of the German-Russian position war, from 1914 to 1918. However, in the final phase of the Polish-Soviet war, million-strong armies were already engaged.

The Soviet had abundant material at their disposal, captured from the White-Russian army, which had been supplied by the western allied powers. Poland carried on the struggle with meager equipment, mainly whatever was abandoned by the occupants. With an extremely strenuous organizational effort, by 1920 the Polish army reached nearly one million men. This was the result of work conducted by General Sosnkowski, which enabled Marshal Piłsudski to enjoy successes at the front.

In the special conditions of this war, the Marshal employed operational methods based on the deep maneuver, surprise and full exploitation of success by relentless pursuit. Piłsudski said once that the most beautiful privilege of war is surprise which beats might.

This idea was an important part of Marshal Piłsudski's war-time strategy.

Several examples can be cited when this was utilized by the Commander-in-Chief and his top leaders in the war operations of 1919 and 1920. Such was the operational premise in April, 1919, crowned with the capture of Vilno.

A similar maneuver was used to capture Kiev, a success not only meaningful politically (help for the Ukraine) but strategically as well. A few weeks later, when the Soviet Twelfth Army, which had been badly beaten near Kiev, was needed to fight off the Polish counter-offensive on the river Wieprz, it became apparent how it had been weakened.

The strategic genius of Piłsudski was demonstrated most dramatically in the epic August victory in 1920.

How did the strategic and operational situation develop then? There followed weeks of terror, which shortly turned to triumph and glory.

In May, 1920, under the direct leadership of Marshal Piłsudski, Polish armies of the southern front undertook an offensive, with the result that Polish divisions and those of the national

Ukraine, led by General Śmigły, took Kiev. To make its situation easier to the south of the river Pripet, the Soviet army, preparing a massive offensive, carried out an attacking operation with part of its forces. Its success was quickly wiped out by the counter-offensive of the reserve army under the leadership of General Sosnkowski.

In July there ensued a heavy Soviet strike in the north, mainly from the "Smolensk Gate", the usual way of earlier Russian aggressions against Poland. The Polish front was seriously shaken; a retreat of the Polish forces over a more than 400 kilometers, to area of Płock near Warsaw, lasted for several weeks. In the meantime, in the south, the masses of Budienny's cavalry outmaneuvered the Polish divisions active there, and the Polish and Ukrainian forces were forced to retreat from Kiev.

Attempts to arrest the massive Soviet offensive were unsuccessful. Polish commanders were not able to master the situation in the north, and Piłsudski had no further reserves.

The drive of the Russian offensive reached the outskirts of Warsaw. At the same time, an extensive maneuver of the enemy was developed against Płock and beyond the Vistule, to outflank the great part of the Polish army gathered in the north.

To the north of the river Pripet was gathered the majority of the Soviet forces, under the leadership of Tuchaczewski — four armies and a cavalry corps.

The situation became more grave with each passing day. The fate of the army and the survival of Poland came into doubt. Political spirits feel, but the morale of the people remained strong.

Tuchaczewski already looked forward to a complete Soviet victory.

The fall of Poland — this was an attempt of Soviet aggression also against western Europe, which did not wish to see the facts. This shortsightedness was to be repeated years later.

Poland did not get significant help from the West in time. Missions and General Weygand, a friend of Poland, paid visits to the country, but deliveries of war material were paralyzed by Czechoslovakia and Germany, and by communist sabotage in these countries. The only gesture of real help was the desire of Hungary to send a thirty-thousand cavalry corps to the Polish front, so necessary to do battle with the cavalry masses of Budienny. But the passage of Hungarian forces to the Polish front was frustrated by the opposition of the Czech government.

Thus, Poland was left alone, in tragic isolation and under pressure from the western powers to capitulate, to throw herself at the mercy of the Soviets.

But providence watched over the Republic. This was not an act isolated from human will. The genius of Józef Piłsudski, his determination, his faith, in spite of everything, in the possi-



bility of victory, were at work. He was seconded by the fighting virtues of the Polish soldier, the work of numerous leaders, the strong spirit of the Polish people, which could not be weakened by the destructive Bolshevik action.

The situation was dramatic. The northern Polish front bent increasingly under the relentless pressure of the enemy. In the south, Lvov was threatened by the hordes of Budienny.

To save his country from disaster, Marshal Piłsudski embarked on a plan unusually bold, strategically ambitious, but based on a sound evaluation of the situation and psychology of the Soviet leaders, and also on faith in his own soldiers and their value as fighters, in their patriotism.

The plan was as follows:

- to hold Warsaw and regions around it, tying up the majority of Tuchaczewski's forces,
- to launch a surprise attack on his weak south wing,
- to pursue relentlessly, in order to destroy the rear of the enemy and cut off his retreat to the east.

The taking of this decision was a difficult, completely independent action of the Commander-in-Chief. He discarded the plans of General Weygand and General Rozwadowski to carry out a counter-offensive on a less risky basis, but not leading to a thorough collapse of the enemy's main grouping of strength.

After thinking over this decision for a few days in complete solitude, a decision which was to be Poland's last chance, Marshal Piłsudski gave orders on August 6 for a counter-offensive from the base of the river Wieprz.

The first difficulty was collecting enough troops for the assault. It was necessary to draw them out of the battle-line in retreat. The chosen divisions executed this admirably. Some of them, for instance the first and third divisions of legionnaires, preceded breaking away from the enemy with victorious offensive moves, and then passed unnoticed to the region of concentration. This was one of the beautiful war operations.

Divisions with special fighting qualities were chosen for the assault: under General Skierski — 14th Poznań, 16th Pomorian, 21st Tatra Highlands, and under General Śmigły-Rydz — the 1st and 3rd legionnaires and a group of cavalry. Marshal Piłsudski took command personally of the counter-offensive. He toured the units chosen for the offensive, to check on the state they were in and, as usual, to raise their spirits. The success depended on the impetus and perseverance of the soldiers.

It was extremely important to tie up the bulk of the Soviet army near Warsaw, so that it could not paralyze the counter-offensive undertaken by Piłsudski.

During his absence, General Sosnkowski received orders to cooperate in completely fulfilling the task. Even earlier, General Sosnkowski effectively strengthened the defense of Warsaw.

On August 16, 1920, the counter-offensive of the Marshal from the river Wieprz began. This situation developed extremely well. The Soviet forces were completely surprised, and could not even offer organized resistance.

In spite of hard fighting, the Polish front near Warsaw did not break. General Józef Haller and General Żeligowski commanded in the center, and General Sikorski in the north. The delayed reinforcements sent by the mounted army of Budienny were stopped.

Fraught with strategic and political results, the Marshal's counter-offensive brought complete and immediate victory.

The element of surprise and the alary assault thoroughly ruined the mighty battle array of Tuchaczewski. One of his armies ceased to exist. A second, losing its equipment, broke through to the east in panic. Two armies and a cavalry corps, after unsuccessful attempts to fight their way through, sought refuge in East Prussia, where they were disarmed. The Polish forces engaged in this counter-offensive were several times weaker than the defeated forces of Tuchaczewski.

This was an epic victory. It saved Poland and Europe. The representative of Great Britain, Lord d'Abernon, writes of it as one of the few battles in history which decided the fate of the world.

And it was indisputably a purely Polish victory: the magnificent concept of Marshal Piłsudski, the agility and perseverance of many Polish commanders and the powerful spurt of fighting spirit in the soldier of Poland.

And again Poland — bulwark of the West — saved the Christian civilization.

The name of the First Marshal of the reborn country joined the ranks of other great leaders and statesmen Poland had produced over the centuries. These are the sources for the pride of our nation, from which we can draw the inspiration to persevere.

A month after the August victory, in a maneuver and general "Niemen" battle, Piłsudski brought about a complete routing of the Soviet forces gathered there. Poland, exhausted as far as funds and means were concerned, without help from the outside, could not carry the war on alone in the approaching winter campaign without grave risk.

Although Poland won the war with Soviet Russia, it was not to reap the fruits of victory in full. This was the result of the shortsighted policies of opposition circles which fought against and paralyzed Marshal Piłsudski's goals, which were Poland's salvation.

What effect did his period of failures and successes in the years 1918 to 1921 have on the course of events in Polish and foreign politics?



In spite of the fact that the country remained under threat, and war operations continued, in Polish internal politics the atmosphere of conflict and struggle did not disappear. The main reason for this was the rabid antagonism of right-wing political circles toward the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief. The manifestations of this enmity were often inconsistent. Sometimes right-wing politicians took a stand corresponding to the concepts of Piłsudski, but unfortunately usually not for long.

Ignacy Paderewski, renowned patriot and premier, in the year 1919 fully backed the federal policy of Piłsudski and defended it on the international arena.

Under the influence of the Kiev victory, the pillar of the Right in parliament, Marshal Trąpczyński, thus spoke to the Commander-in-Chief, in a manner worthy of a Polish statesman: "From the time of Chocim, the Polish people have not known such triumph... the victorious march on Kiev gave the nation a feeling of power, strengthened faith in free future... By this military deed you not only proved that the Poles are brave, but tore out of the bosom of the nation and changed into a banner its best yearning, its chivalry in the service of men. The whole of Poland is one in the wish that the people liberated by our army decide their fate themselves...". (\*)

A political ally of R. Dmowski (an opponent of Piłsudski) recalls his words:

"...we were shaking (in Paris, 1918) that perhaps Piłsudski would not be able to master the extremely dangerous situation in Poland... Our thoughts and feeling were then with the Chief-of-State". (\*\*)

At one of the meetings of the State Defence Council, during a dramatic discussion in July 1920, amidst violent attacks on Piłsudski, Dmowski said: „I argued that authority was absolutely necessary in Poland, and I saw such authority in you; I could not wish to overthrow this authority”. (\*\*\*)

Unfortunately, these sentiments were not expressed in the deeds of the opposition leaders. On the contrary, there were incidents such as the attempt at a coup d'état in January 1919, liquidated in a few hours.

General Sosnkowski often acted the role of mediator in trying to control political situations dangerous for the country.

Even in the State Defense Council, called in July 1920, where the common people were presented by the peasant leader Witos, and the socialist leader Daszyński, clashes were not avoided even in tragic moments, and especially prevalent were attacks on Piłsudski.

\*) "Kultura", No. 11, 1966, p. 120.

\*\*\*) T. Komarnicki, "J. Piłsudski i polska racja stanu" 1967, p. 7.

\*\*\*) "Kultura", No. 12, 1966, p. 131.

In July, 1920, a despondency and even breakdown of national dignity in certain political circles was manifested in connection with attempts to secure the help of the western powers and at the conference in Spa. In defiance of the intentions of Marshal Piłsudski, the Polish delegations agreed to the demands of the West amounting to capitulation, and did not remain firm in defense of the Polish goals.

The authority of the State Defense Council complicated Marshal Piłsudski's influence on matters of state; this became apparent after the August victory, and especially had a detrimental effect on the decisions of the Polish-Russian peace treaty concluded at Riga.

The Polish-Russian truce was concluded in October 1920. Through the final Polish victories, the Soviet army was completely crushed and the armistice was a salvation for it. Spirits in the Polish armed forces were high, as well as in the allied Byelorussian units of Balachowicz and the Ukrainian units of Petlura, which for some time continued to fight against the Bolsheviks east of the armistice line.

The high morale of the victorious armies pointed to the possibility of continuing the war for a full exploitation of the success achieved.

Nevertheless, the material situation — great shortages in war material and equipment necessary in the event of a winter campaign — stood in the way unless sizeable help from the outside could be obtained. After the end of the war, the West had a great surplus of material, but displayed no readiness to help Poland. Therefore, the Polish government entered peace negotiations. The advantage that Poland had as the victor was not utilized to gain concessions from a beaten Soviet Russia which would ensure the strategic security of the Republic of Poland.

A return to the federal policy on a large scale was thwarted by the dominant Polish quarters, but there were possibilities to realize at least partial gains which would approach the ideas of Marshal Piłsudski to the benefit of Polish interests. The position of the opposition in the Sejm (parliament) and the government was characterized by a readiness to accept far reaching compromises, if only a peace treaty could be reached speedily. An influential leader of the delegation used to say: „This will be my peace, and not that of Piłsudski, and the frontier will be delineated by me, and not by him“.

Peace was concluded under the influence of political circles which had been working against the plans of Marshal Piłsudski for a long time. His authority regarding the decisions reached at Riga was thoroughly blocked. There is data that the Soviet delegation had been ready to make serious concessions. Therefore, the peace concluded at Riga was a lost opportunity to better consolidate the position of Poland.



The probable chance to liberate the Byelorussian territory, in the wide western strip saturated with Polish population, was lost. To the east of the new frontier remained certain adjoining regions with a Polish majority. The Ukraine also remained under the yoke of the Soviet Union.

Despite these deficiencies, the Riga peace partially improved the structure of eastern Europe. Thanks to the Polish victory, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania were able to maintain their independence.

By the summer of 1920 Poland's international position had fallen very low. The western powers were ready to sacrifice the interests and even the survival of Poland to neutralize the aggression of the Soviet Union.

The autumn of the same year brought about a complete change. As a result of Polish victories over Soviet Russia, respect for Poland, which had ended the war victoriously, was at its height.

The West appreciated the historical role of the Polish Commander-in-Chief who, by the strength of his spirit and strategic talent saved his country from extermination and Europe from invasion and the disaster of a Bolshevik revolution.

On the invitation of the French government, Marshal Piłsudski visited Paris in the company of Military Affairs Minister K. Sosnkowski and Foreign Affairs Minister E. Sapieha. Piłsudski was received not only with the honors due him, but with signs of sincere admiration and affection on the part of the French people. The talks undertaken on cooperation between the two countries as allies led to an unusual Polish diplomatic success.

An alliance between France and Poland was concluded, aimed at mutual assistance in case of German aggression. Two days later a military convention was signed (February 21, 1921). General Sosnkowski negotiated it. The convention formed a favorable basis for Polish security and contained, what was significant at the time, an obligation of sorts in case of Russian attack on Poland.

Here are the main points of the 1921 convention: „In the event of German aggression against either of the two countries, both countries are equally obliged to grant each other assistance, in accordance with the mutual understanding...”

„In case Poland is threatened by the Soviet republic with war or in the event of an attack by the latter, France obligates herself to go into action both on land and on sea in order to still ensure Poland of security from the side of Germany... and to grant her assistance in resistance against the Soviet army”.

The political alliance and military convention with France to a great extent realized the basic elements of Marshal Piłsudski's concept concerning the foundations on which the peace of Europe ought to be based; an inseparable peace, not only that of the West. Such a peace required the development into a system of

lasting, loyal cooperation between countries forming the camp of nations striving to consolidate peaceful coexistence.

Within a short time an alliance and military convention between Poland and Rumania were also concluded. This was a useful element in the system of peace in the eastern sector, which Marshal Piłsudski sought to expand.

Through victory, then, which had unfortunately not been fully exploited, and through defensive alliance agreements, a foundation was laid for the life of the reborn country in the period between the two world wars.

### **VII. Mounting Dangers. The Reactions of Marshal Piłsudski**

The First World War of 1914-1918 did not fulfill the hopes of the wide masses — it did not become the last war.

Following their victory, the Western democracies found themselves on a path leading not to a lasting peace, but to its loss.

The treaty concluded at Versailles, which formed the basis of the international order, closed the war operations. But from the very beginning of this new era there could be no doubt that sources of aggression threatening to upset the harmony between nations, continued to exist. Despite the defeats they suffered and the military and social upheavals they underwent, Russia and Germany were to continue their attempts to break down the established foundations of peace.

Marshal Piłsudski was well aware of this danger, which affected his foreign political tactics and the channels in which the national effort was directed.

The slogan of the Soviet leader Tuchaczewski from the period of his march on Warsaw, that the Red Army would spread the seeds of revolution throughout the world, as well as the teachings of Lenin and the actions of the Soviet government, left no doubt about the goal of the Soviets. They were dangerous both for Poland and the world, primarily for Europe. Immediately after concluding a peace treaty with Poland and in the years following, Soviet Russia demonstrated how dangerously and insidiously for Poland this "neighbourly coexistence" would develop.

And what was the situation prevailing with regard to Poland's western neighbour? The atmosphere and political climate in Germany indicated that the German people, and primarily their leaders, continued to burn with the desire for vengeance and revenge. From the beginning, there appeared numerous attempts to paralyze clauses of the peace treaty and endeavors to thwart the stabilization of a strong Poland with reasonably delimited frontiers, such as: scuttling the problems of Polish Silesia, Danzig, Masurian Prussia, counter-action to the Polish policy of peaceful coexistence with nations of Central-Eastern Europe and



in the Baltic region; along with Soviet policy, frantic opposition to the federal policy of Marshal Piłsudski, in particular his attempts to revive the union of Poland with the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the spirit of the five-centuries-old tradition of the Union which had been the basis of the might of the Commonwealth and the freedom of its nations. The anti-Polish action of Germany and Soviet Russia had an effect on the shaky attitude of the victorious West toward Poland's vital interests, as well as toward the real foundations of the peace to come.

In this complicated situation, the only thing which could have consolidated the peace would have been a consistent policy on the part of the victors, stripped of any illusions and aware of the possibility of the dangerous developments in relations between nations.

This could only have been accomplished by statesmen with wide political horizons, with a will to act firmly, not giving into the customs of day-to-day, election-to-election politics.

In the period between the two world wars, the democratic West, the nations of the "peace camp" had no statesmen of the stature of Clemenceau or Poincaré, and most of all Piłsudski. From the beginning of the post-war "Versailles era", the conduct of international politics was carried out badly.

The aureole of a victorious France was indisputable. However, its position became weakened immediately. Considerations of strategic security, in accordance with the proposals of Marshal Foch, induced France to make demands that its eastern frontier run along the river Rhine. Under pressure from its allies, France abandoned this claim. It was to be replaced by American-British guarantees which were to protect France in the event of German aggression. But the turn to isolation in United States policy nullified these guarantees.

Solidarity between France and Great Britain in the field of post-war policy declined, particularly with regard to German problems. Fearing an increase in France's role in post-Versailles Europe, British policy displayed certain pro-German tendencies. These were accompanied by excessive moral and material demobilization of the victorious countries, especially in Great Britain.

The pro-German position of Great Britain was painfully felt, first of all, by the interests of the reborn Republic of Poland. It failed to receive all the national territories to which it was entitled. The demands of Poland's strategic security in the west and north in its frontier with Germany were completely ignored by the western allies. The outline of the western and northern frontier of Poland was established in such a way that it handed the country over into the strategic claws of German superior strength. The excessively, as if maliciously, extended border resulted in a double and thorough outflanking of Poland: from East Prussia in the north, from Silesia in the south-west.



This Versailles decision to handicap Poland was not, of course, an act of French initiative.

This, then, was the situation of Poland as regards the West at the outset of the twenty-year period of peace.

In spite of political efforts and victorious results of fighting, Poland achieved only some of its indispensable requisites for security and the development of its eastern frontiers.

The internal conditions in the reborn country, politically, social and economic, were also a cause for worry. An unusually difficult period followed, filled with pressures of an atmosphere fraught with danger and manifestations harmful to the might of the country, a period during which the thought and action of Józef Piłsudski came into play.

Then came years of gradually increasing danger to Poland and to peace in general.

After concluding a peace treaty with Poland, Soviet Russia undertook actions designed to create confusion in Poland, as well as social conflict and sabotage. In the borderland of the eastern region, diversive action went on for a number of years, most often organized by Soviet units protecting the frontier. Units well organized militarily carried out assaults, sabotage and murder. Antagonisms of certain non-Polish groups toward the country were stirred up, and pro-Soviet organizations formed. Diversionary forays sometimes took on the form of sizeable military assaults, such as the capture of the country seat of Stobce in the Nowogródek province, including the subprefecture offices, or the capture by saboteurs in Polesie of a train carrying the voivode. The Soviet action took various forms to weaken the internal strength of Poland and to undercut its prestige at home and abroad. Soon the Soviet activity began to concentrate on stirring up class struggle, national minority strife, sabotage and intelligence.

I am confining myself to naming only the more important facts attesting to the growing danger.

In 1922 the fact of Soviet-German cooperation became known, i.e. the treaty of Rapallo. This was not the first and only proof of collaboration between the two dangerous enemies of Poland and of democratic Europe. In August 1920, a great part (of four armies) of the Soviet front rounded by Marshal Piłsudski's counter-offensive sought shelter beyond the borders of East Prussia. Instead of interning this army for the duration of the war, the German government freed it and allowed it to go through Lithuania in order to join the remainder of the Soviet forces repelled to the east.

The agreement at Rapallo made possible large-scale cooperation between Germany and the Soviet Union designed to overthrow the order established by the Versailles Treaty.

On the strength of this understanding Germany, restricted



by the military clauses of Versailles, moved its preparatory efforts aimed at expanding its armed forces in the future to the territory of Russia, such as war material and training of specialists, mainly air force, armored troops, etc. In central Russia there were built a number of war material factories and several schooling and training centers, of course completely out of the allies' control.

In 1926 (April) the Rapallo Treaty was extended by a new German-Soviet agreement which expanded and drew closer the collaboration between the contracting parties.

Nevertheless, the western democracies were not willing to employ realistic methods to remove the growing threat of aggression.

They succumbed to illusions concerning the effectiveness of the League of Nations, the possibility of peaceful coexistence with Germany and, in the following years, the peaceful role of Soviet Russia. The French government increasingly came under British influence, and in many instances made its moves dependent on Great Britain, although these were sometimes not conducive to maintaining the peace.

In this atmosphere of political shortsightedness, the West's vigilance regarding the constant threat of aggression steadily decreased, although this threat loomed larger with each passing year.

This vigilance was also weakened by the base and lying propaganda of the enemy, which made great efforts to undermine Poland's political and moral position in the wide circles of opinion abroad. Waiting to pounce on Poland's independence, the authors of this propaganda indicated that she was the "main obstacle to the maintenance of peace in Europe", that her border with Germany was a „frontier in flames“, etc.

During the period between wars, there were also destructive anti-Polish activities organized by the Soviet Union and Germany and, unfortunately sometimes also backed by some of our smaller neighbours.

Poland, the true bastion of the existing though fragile peace, was the main target at which Germany and the Soviet Union directed their aggressive pressure, to weaken its spirit of resistance and to shake the allies' readiness to help Poland in case of war.

This persistent action aimed at psychologically disarming the nations pledged to defend peace and liberty produced some results. On the part of France, there appeared certain attempts to weaken its obligations toward Poland stemming from the 1921 agreements. Marshal Piłsudski effectively opposed these plans disastrous for Poland, France and the peace of Europe. His authority came into play here. Therefore, the alliance and military con-

vention of 1921 lasted until the Second World War, without losing their legality.

In the thirties, the might of both Germany and Russia rose steadily and rapidly, in the economic field as well as in war production and armed forces.

The Versailles clauses which had disarmed the military power of Germany were openly defied at an ever-increasing pace after Hitler's coming to power. From the permissible seven divisions of infantry and three mounted divisions, after introducing the forbidden universal military service, Hitler rose to imposing military might and in 1939 could put in the field about 110 divisions in the initial mobilization. In order to dispel the impression that the democratic camp was weak, let me say that its forces — of France, Poland, Great Britain, Czechoslovakia — numbered about 200 divisions. And this is not counting the great resources of the British empire and the United States.

During this time, the Soviet forces grew to a size dangerous for Poland and Europe. It is true that a Stalinist purge (1937-38) had physically liquidated a great number of high ranking leaders and officers, including Tuchaczewski.

In this situation, the governments of the western powers tried to neutralize the crisis by unrealistic halfmeasures. A desire to satisfy the appetites of the aggressors at the expense of concessions made by weaker nations was quite obviously apparent in these initiatives.

The first serious step of the great powers in this direction was the Locarno Pact of 1925. It introduced great differences between western and eastern Europe in the interpretation of obligations of the great western powers concerning frontiers and assistance in case of German aggression. The possible help to allies in the West was meaningful because it was to be direct action, whereas in the East it was anticipated as action involving the League of Nations, a complicated procedure without assurance that it would be effective and timely. This discrimination against the smaller eastern nations weakened Poland's security in case of attack by Germany. The stipulations of the Locarno Pact complicated the principle of immediate help by allied France in accordance with the Polish - French military convention of 1921.

Marshal Piłsudski disapproved of the Locarno Pact and pointed out its harmfulness, since it made the direction of German aggressive expansion easier to the east than to the west.

Similar tendencies were displayed by the plans of the Four Power Pact, and later the Eastern Pact. Besides the danger that the selfish dictate would hurt the weaker nations, there also appeared the spectre of Soviet Russia as a co-arbiter of the problems of its neighbours. Sincere cooperation between Poles of all walks of life, so indispensable to the besieged and undermined fortress which was Poland, was far from ideal. When in



time tragic trials befell the nation, the instinct of the people brought to the fore the imposing strength of spirit of the Poles, and with it a capacity to work together selflessly during the war and occupation. Unfortunately, under conditions of the free world these marvelous characteristics remained hidden in the corners of the souls of the Polish people.

After the conclusion of the Soviet war, Marshal Piłsudski said once that we had a few years without dangerous pressure from our enemies which we should utilize to recover and gather our strength. He said that if things went well, we could have allies in case of attack from the west, but if the push came from east, we would probably be left to our own devices.

This outlook was an indication how the work of the Marshal would develop „on the track“ of war-time planning.

After a few years, Poland's external situation became increasingly difficult. The foundations which were to ensure the peace crumbled, since the policies of the West purposely failed to react to the growing danger. Poland went through internal economic, social and political difficulties — the ruinous results of many years of war. Also, the diversive action and enemy propaganda designed to lower its resistance continued unabated.

Piłsudski, and in accordance with his ideas the Polish governments, attempted to counteract the mounting internal dangers and to fight against external enemy pressure on Poland.

What were the Polish reactions? Let us indicate the most important matters.

First of all, there were the strong armed incursions by the Bolsheviks against our eastern regions. They were an illustration of the “neighbourly good will” of Soviet Russia, which had just concluded a peace.

The situation was only controlled by the formation of a strong „Frontier Area Protection Corps“ — thirty batallions and thirty squadrons of crack soldiers. Their course of action — not only to defend the frontier line, but also the larger border-zone, to crush the rampant assaults by Bolshevik bands. The Frontier Area Protection Corps accomplished this feat by its force of arms and good fighting tactics, as well as, to a great extent, gradually through social action, through which it gained the confidence and cooperation of the local population, not only Polish, but often also of other nationalities.

Marshal Piłsudski devoted particular attention to foreign affairs. As far as he could, he tried to exert a halting influence on the tendency to weaken the established peace structure of Europe. He was concerned with maintaining the elements bound to the strategic security of Poland, and particularly with keeping the inviolable validity of the military convention with France. It was also important to arrest the political slide down toward illusions concerning Soviet help in saving the

peace. Another pressing concern was to turn away attempts of the great powers to form a directorate, since these powers were inclined to disregard the interests of the weaker partners of the peace structure. In anti-Polish action in the international field, the tendency to revise Versailles territorial decisions at the expense of Poland could be clearly discerned.

In the thirties the western powers got the idea that opposition to German aggression could be based on Soviet Russia. Poland did not share these illusions. As it shortly turned out, this could lead to a situation where there could be a danger that the supposed "ally" would grab certain Polish territories. This was the reason for the negative attitude of Poland toward such dangerous ideas. In a short time events were to prove the validity of the Polish appraisal of the true aims of the Soviets.

Marshal Piłsudski clearly foresaw the great threat to peace posed by the coming to power of Hitler. He felt that the catastrophe of war should be prevented in time. For this reason he secretly proposed to allied France in 1933 joint action in so-called preventive war. Most probably this would have been an action much different from large-scale military operations costly in men and supplies. Poland's ally did not take up this proposal. The year 1939 was to show once again how Marshal Piłsudski's unusual gift served to predict coming events.

During this period from year to year anti-Polish action had an increasing effect on international public opinion. The Marshal was able to effectively neutralize this danger.

On his initiative, a number of "non-aggression" agreements were concluded: with the Soviets in 1932 and with Germany in 1934. There were no secret clauses to the agreement with Germany, but the German contracting party was informed that Poland was retaining its commitments concerning its alliance with France.

These "non-aggression" treaties resulted in a halting of the anti-Polish propaganda and raising the position and prestige of Poland. It was a move which "pleasantly surprised" world opinion.

As a result of this increasingly complicated situation, vigilance was sharpened with regard to the two possible aggressors. Among other things, the Marshal ordered a permanent joint study of the Foreign Affairs Ministry and the Army Command to work on conclusions from observation and investigation of the growing threat; of course, the well developed intelligence service was also at work, making it possible for the Polish authorities to realize the threat of aggression and to react to it.

Around 1930, despite the rising economic crisis, plans were undertaken to intensively expand the existing armament production — studies, experiments, plans, training of specialists. This initial period made it possible a few years later, when the



means were at Poland's disposal, to begin a large-scale, useful production aimed at modernizing and strengthening the army. It soon developed that Poland was capable of producing valuable people in the field of industrial technology as well — the inventor, engineer, laborer.

These people were characterized by an enthusiasm for their work and patriotism seldom seen elsewhere.

Until his death, Marshal Piłsudski's opinion regarding the value of France as an ally in preserving the peace did not undergo a change. It was not adversely affected even by the serious fluctuations in French policy, often unfavorable not only for Poland, but for France's security and peace as well.

In spite of all this, the Marshal considered it essential to preserve the Polish — French alliance, as one of the few constant elements of a peace steadily eroded at its foundations.

The great authority of Marshal Piłsudski made it possible to keep this alliance in force, along with the agreements connected with it.

Such a grave external situation had to have its repercussions on the internal life of Poland as well.

I will indicate the two most important acts of the Marshal's internal policy, which were undoubtedly connected with the external situation of Poland.

May 1926 — political intervention of Marshal Piłsudski which turned into a *c o u p d' e t a t*. This was followed by facts extremely important to the security of Poland. Discrimination through the Locarno Treaty, the perspective of a revision of Polish frontiers to the advantage of Germany and, in April 1926, a few weeks before the May events, the German — Soviet agreement, which expanded the treaty of collaboration concluded by Germany and Russia at Rapallo in 1922.

During this time the internal situation in Poland worsened disturbingly in the economic and social fields. The helplessness of the Polish parliament, torn by party struggles, catastrophically weakened the country. Its strength was drained to the extent that it could have easily become the quarry of an aggressor. It was this state of affairs, and certainly not a "hunger for power" that caused the May action of Marshal Piłsudski. It was aimed at restoring the country's strength and ability to oppose external threats. The tragically bloody turn of the May action was caused mainly by the rejection of the possibility of compromise by opponents of the Marshal.

Another fact of similar origin was the Constitution of 1935. I do not believe that creators considered it the ideal solution to the outmoded forms of parliamentary democracy shrouded in an atmosphere of the Nineteenth Century. These forms did not keep in step with the rapid technical and moral revolution of contemporary life. The constitution of 1935 to a great extent

fulfilled these modern needs. It offered useful solutions to problems resulting from Poland's situation (for instance, maintenance of the continuity of the state in case of the tragedy of war).

Therefore, it was not only a good try at solving the crisis of democratic institutions growing in the world, but first of all was an act of strengthening a country threatened from without.

In conclusion to these remarks, I would like to stress their main contention: in the period between the two world wars, the situation of Poland was characterized by a constant state of danger from the side of Germany and Russia.

The Polish people did not fully realize this. What was worse, numerous circles in Polish political life did not sufficiently take it into consideration either.

The danger mounted gradually. The Marshal foresaw this from the first years of independence. Therefore, he concentrated the activity of the state on the main objective — the proper means to save and stabilize the existence of a free Poland. These means were — Poland's own defensive potential and the real structure of peace in Europe.

Poland of itself did not represent sufficient strength which could alone withstand the expected aggression. However, this aggression threatened all of Europe, and therefore the entire continent should have worked to prevent it.

The saving of peace, in accordance with Piłsudski's concept, was possible only by way of a united readiness to act in case of need, even by force of arms. The camp of peaceful nations had the right and moral duty, as well as sufficient means, to prevent the catastrophe of war.

In this historical epoch the survival of a free Poland, in the mind of Marshal Piłsudski, was connected with two essential elements:

1. optimal development of Poland's armed forces and defense potential within its means and possibilities at its disposal,

2. maintenance of the strength of Europe in readiness to prevent aggression or to break it by a concerted effort in case of an aggressive war.

In the period discussed here, the matters of greatest concern to the reborn country were: foreign affairs and things connected with the armed forces.

### **VIII. Ideas of Marshal Piłsudski Still Timely.**

The epoch of Piłsudski did not end with his death. Poland was still faced with the same problems of war and peace. To fulfill the tasks stemming from this, the course of action pointed out by the Marshal had to be maintained. The survival of



Poland, as well as the peace of Europe, could only be achieved by means of following the ideas of Marshal Piłsudski.

With the rise in the threat from Hitler, the western democracies sought ways to control the crisis. However, they deluded themselves that this was possible by means of egoistic palliatives at the expense of weaker partners and with the participation of Soviet Russia.

As Hitler's efforts increased to expand German military might, the Polish government heightened the tempo of work on Poland's war potential and carried on animated diplomatic action.

A large intensification in Poland's war industry was made possible by a French loan to rearm the Polish forces (secured at the beginning of 1936 through negotiations of General Sosnkowski and later finalized during the same year by Marshal Rydz-Śmigły in France) and Poland's own credit operations.

The increased German threat tightened cooperation between the allies, France and Poland.

Here again the policy line laid out by Marshal Piłsudski continued to be carried out: assurance of war cooperation between the allies and Poland's constant readiness to undertake joint military action to prevent German aggression.

After the German forces illegally entered the Rhineland in March 1936, the Polish government declared its readiness to participate in joint military action against Hitler. Such action could have probably prevented Germany's unleashing of a war. However, France declined Poland's offer. The principle of anticipating aggression by military action which, as we have seen, was characteristic of the concepts of Marshal Piłsudski in military strategy and in case of need, in active foreign policy, was an indication to later Polish governments to act in a similar way if the circumstances arose.

Besides the situation which resulted from the occupation of the Rhineland, another similar situation arose in 1938: the attempt of Hitler against Czechoslovakia. He was emboldened by the impunity with which he had been able to act earlier. There followed a capitulation of the western powers, the "Munich" of infamous memory. Things could have been different if the Czechs had defended themselves by force of arms and France, threatened in its vital interests, had decided to come to the aid of its Czech ally. Then Poland would have undoubtedly stood on the side of France in a war against Germany. The strategic situation in 1938 was much more auspicious than in 1939.

This was another opportunity lost, and there were several of them in the period between the wars. Since they were not carried out in accordance with the ideas of Marshal Piłsudski, they led the world to a catastrophe.

Three months before the outbreak of the war in 1939, the conditions were settled regarding the actualization of coopera-

tion between the two allied armies in case of war (in accordance with convention of 1921).; In case of a major German attack on Poland, after mobilization the French army was to strike with its main force at Germany, and was to begin air action immediately at the outset of war operations.

Four days after Hitler's attack on Poland, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany. The war thus became a common endeavor, a coalition war.

In the west the Germans left very weak defenses. In spite of the extremely favorable situation, the French Commander-in-Chief did not carry out the obligations undertaken, either with regard to the major strike or air action. Another lost opportunity, for which Poland paid tragically, and a few months later France also paid with a painful defeat.

The September campaign of 1939 not only could have failed to result in a defeat of Poland, but most probably could have broken Hitler's advantage.

An absolute prerequisite for this result was that the coalition war of Poland, France and Great Britain be conducted by the Western allies with a will to fight hard and unyieldingly.

In the West there was a shortage of such will. In this period only Poland was distinguished for its spiritual power to resist and the selfless determination of its army.

One aspiration of Marshal Piłsudski was fulfilled — that in the approaching war with the German aggressor Poland not be alone.

Unfortunately, his fear that the allies might not carry out their obligations with honor was also fulfilled.

Here in the free world, and secretly in the captive fatherland, Poles are surrounding the person of Marshal Piłsudski with reverence and homage, and many with the deep feeling of soldierly love. Is this enough? We claim that his thoughts and teachings are still timely today, and will remain so for Poland's future. But are they sufficiently well known in the wide circle of the Polish people, and all the more so among foreigners?

For the good of our cause, and for the cause of peace, knowledge and proper understanding of the concepts and deeds of the first Marshal of Poland is extremely important. He did not leave a written testament. But it is not difficult to deduce it from his ideological and political concepts, from his principles of soldierly morality and honor with regard to his own people as well as other nations. A rich source of information are the many writings of the Marshal.

The Marshal's first command of sorts stemming from his deeds is: the life of man does not have its full value if it is bereft of ideals. For a Pole — it is the freedom of his country. This was the content of the life of Piłsudski and the generation he led. He also indicated this direction to the Polish tomorrow.



This work will throw light upon only some of his teachings important today, when we must defend the good name of Poland and the Polish interpretation of the law of nations and their peaceful coexistence. They ought to be stressed at least in outline.

In his actions, concepts and foreign policy the Marshal realized in full harmony general-human ideals and Polish national ideals. To his way of thinking, the measure of real progress is freedom and peace.

The basis of a just and lasting peace is the freedom of nations, and especially of captive peoples.

This is a goal with deep moral value — it should continue to be a guidepost for future generations. This is the idea of the epoch of Piłsudski.

The nuclear epoch we are entering today and the necessity for cooperation between larger national units does not cancel out the need for this principle — freedom. Within its framework it offers various solutions, among them the federal solutions sought by Marshal Piłsudski.

Freedom and peace — these are the goals for which he fought, at the same time building up Poland's defensive strength. This same goal should also be the ideal of Poland in the future.

Peace, especially in Europe, is indivisible. Neglect of the nations of eastern Europe is an obstacle to the continent's stabilization. The problem of the nations of Central-Eastern Europe is still vital to Poland.

Salvation from catastrophe depends on the strength of spirit of the nations seeking peace.

So long as sources of aggression exist, vigilance, readiness for prevention, struggle of the peace camp against disintegrating influences, remain the main task. Free Poles ought to influence the opinion of nations in this spirit, as Marshal Piłsudski wished.

In difficult times Józef Piłsudski thus exhorted his own people: "Not to lose faith in Poland. Keep national dignity and pride in the great traditions of the Polish Commonwealth. Not to slacken the fight for the fatherland, nor opposition to the yoke of captivity".

It develops from his ideas that work for the nation and the state ought to be based on a social solidarity, on a desire for a reasonable compromise in the interest of the integrity of the state.

The Constitution of 1935, the last act of the will of Marshal Piłsudski, defined the principles of Poland's endeavors and the obligations of the citizen toward his country.

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This work will throw light upon the life of the Polish people and the role of the Polish nation in the history of Europe. It is a book which will be read with interest and pleasure by all who are interested in the history of the Polish people and the role of the Polish nation in the history of Europe.

In his actions, concepts and foreign policy Marshal Piłsudski realized in full the Polish national ideal and the Polish national program. He was a man of great vision and a man of great courage. He was a man who was not afraid to stand up for his principles and his country.

The book is a masterpiece of historical writing. It is a book which is both a work of art and a work of scholarship. It is a book which is both a work of history and a work of literature.

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